

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana News Releases, 1928,
1956-present

University Relations

9-5-1980

University of Montana football defensive preview – 1980

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "University of Montana football defensive preview – 1980" (1980). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 31461.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/31461>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Relations at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



Dave Guffey
Sports Information Director
406/243-2522

guffey/stc
9-5-80
state, opp., sid

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA FOOTBALL
DEFENSIVE PREVIEW--1980

MISSOULA--

INSIDE LINEBACKERS/Ken Flajole, coach

Last spring the Grizzly football team sponsored a boxing smoker to raise money for their program. Part of the show was a tag team wrestling match and one of the wrestlers, linebacker Kent Clausen, was tagged "The Claw." The audience loved it, and laughed until they cried.

No one is laughing now.

Clausen, an All-American candidate, returns for his final collegiate season, but if the pro scouts have anything to say about it, the 6-4, 235-pounder will be playing football for a long time.

Playing in only seven games last season, "The Claw" accumulated 110 tackles. In his career he has amassed 267 tackles in 29 games. He also has nine career interceptions. He is also a candidate for Academic All-American. He has a 3.71 GPA in business, and has carried a perfect 4.0 the past two quarters.

"With the return of Clausen we are more physical now than we ever have been," said inside linebacker coach Ken Flajole. "It appears as though he's now at 100 percent, and we need a big year from him."

"Without a doubt we need some younger players to come through for us," Flajole said. Curt McElroy (6-1, 215), Scott Gratton (6-0, 205) and Dave Kline (6-1, 205) are some of the young players Flajole is talking about. Three-time letterman Dave Gleason (6-2, 215) could also see a lot of action.

"Height is probably our biggest problem," Flajole said. "We need good support from the defensive line to have a good season."

-over-

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS/Mike Johnson, coach

"We're really lucky Jim Hogan (6-0, 215) got another year of eligibility," Mike Johnson, outside linebacker coach, said. "He might not be that big but he makes up for it in desire. Moving Dennis Bowman (6-2, 205) will also help us a lot. He has good football sense."

Johnson said sophomores Steve Garrison (6-3, 210) and Jake Lind (6-3, 200), "are both young and starting to come on strong."

Newcomers Andre Stephens (6-3, 198) and John Rooney (6-1, 190) are learning their positions fast, and are hard hitters, Johnson noted.

"Depth at outside linebacker is better than we thought it would be," Johnson said. "We're not as big as we'd like to be, but all of the players at that position can hit and they play hard."

DEFENSIVE BACKS/Rick Johnson, coach

With three-year starter Jay Becker and newcomer Scott Ellig, the Grizzlies have an outstanding one-two punch in the secondary at the safety positions.

"Jay (5-10, 185) is a great hitter," said DB coach Rick Johnson. "He is also a very consistent player who lets opponents know when he tackles them. He hits hard. We think our safeties are as good as anyone's in the league."

Johnson added that letterman Reed Madison (6-1, 185) and newcomers Gary Lowry (6-2, 190) and Paul Silovsky (6-2½, 195) "Have all practiced well, and show signs of being very competitive at safety in the future."

At cornerback, Johnson said he had six players vying for the two starting berths. "Two of them haven't surfaced above the rest yet," he said.

Potential candidates are lettermen Terry Thomas (5-7, 163), Randy Laird (6-2, 190) and John Kovacich (6-0, 182), and newcomers Mickey Sutton (5-8, 170), Mike Hogan (5-10½, 180) and Tony Fudge (6-2, 195).

"Our strength in the secondary is our toughness," Johnson said. "Our players make you know when you've been hit. They are very aggressive. We will primarily be a zone defense team."

"Our big problem now is to find four kids who can play together in the secondary," Johnson continued. "We have a very competitive situation for positions, and that can do nothing but make us a better football team as the season progresses."

DEFENSIVE LINE/Mike Van Diest, Coach

"We've got the top noseguard in the conference in Arnie Rigoni (6-0 $\frac{1}{2}$, 222)," boasts tackle-noseguard-tackle (TNT) coach Mike Van Diest, who also serves as UM's strength coach.

"With Arnie, Pat Curry (6-5 $\frac{1}{2}$, 241) Dave Paoli and Bret Barrick (6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$, 240) all returning we feel real good about our defensive front," Van Diest said. "Pat is as good as anyone I've seen and is only a junior."

Van Diest said he was very confident about junior Paoli (6-1, 217), Rigoni's backup. "Dave and Arnie have graded the highest in the practice films we've seen."

"What we have to do next is find another tackle to back up the veterans," Van Diest said. Currently battling for those spots are Marty Andrews (6-2, 240), Dave Chaplin (6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$, 219), Mike Crouse (6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$, 230) and Ron Sharkey (6-5, 221).

"Ron is really coming on," Van Diest said. "He's really good on the pass rush, but needs to handle the run better."

Freshmen noseguard Mike Smith (6-1, 220) is "very aggressive, with a good temperament to play the defensive line."

"Overall I'm very pleased with our play, although a couple of injuries have slowed us down," Van Diest said. "Our spring weight program really added some strength, and we're seeing the results now. I think the defensive line will set the tempo for the rest of the defense."

###